

MR. McFADDEN: Do you have any knowledge that it is a proprietary of Project Democracy?

MR. ABRAMS: No.

MS. WILKINS: Can I ask who you thought built the airstrip? What was your understanding of who used the airstrip, who built it, what it was there for?

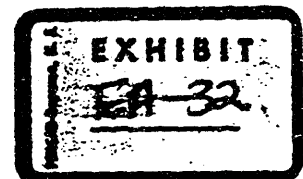
MR. ABRAMS: My understanding was nobody ever used the airstrip. Maybe that's wrong, but that it had never quite gotten into operation.

My memory is that when I was in Costa Rica, which, again, I place as sort of March - April - May in 1986, somebody was building an airstrip, not that there was an airstrip. And then Arias was sworn in I think August 8, so my understanding is it was never used.

What was it? Well, as I say, we knew that there were outside benefactors. We knew that the Contras were getting lots of, at least ammunition, getting military equipment -- if not cash, then at least military equipment. And I think it is fair to say that everybody involved in the RIG knew that Ollie was somehow connected with this but did not know how.

Once he said to me -- and I think to Rich Armitage -- that he was absolutely straight and that he was not violating the law -- I think Rich asked him are you violating the law -- and once he said to me, I don't

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remember the context, I have never solicited any, I am not violating the law. And once he said to me everything that I may be doing I have passed by the White House Counsel.

So, that satisfied my --

MS. WILKINS: I'm just trying to understand how you learned of it, if you didn't have a good idea of what it was, that Ollie just mentioned there was this trip --

MR. ABRAMS: It's perfectly plausible.

MS. WILKINS: -- with no --

MR. ABRAMS: I think we use the term "benefactors." Benefactors are people who are actually building an airstrip [REDACTED] And it was perfectly plausible to me that the person who would know about this was Ollie, because he had the most information about this private network. He had a lot more information about it than the CIA did.

I think most of us were careful not to ask lots of questions, other than once in a while, to say is this all okay, is this stuff legal -- once in a while.

I had some reassurance of that when he said it had been run by the White House Counsel.

MS. WILKINS: Did the Secretary know that--it was there, the airstrip?